

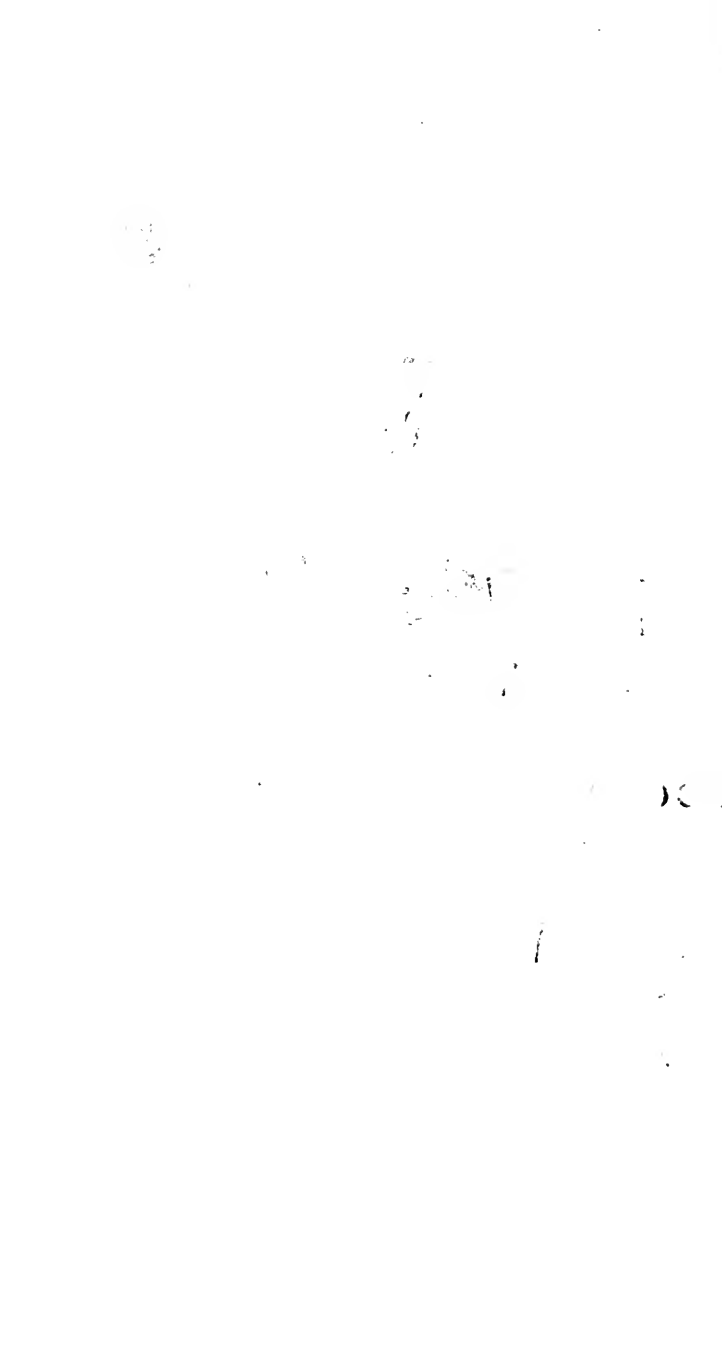


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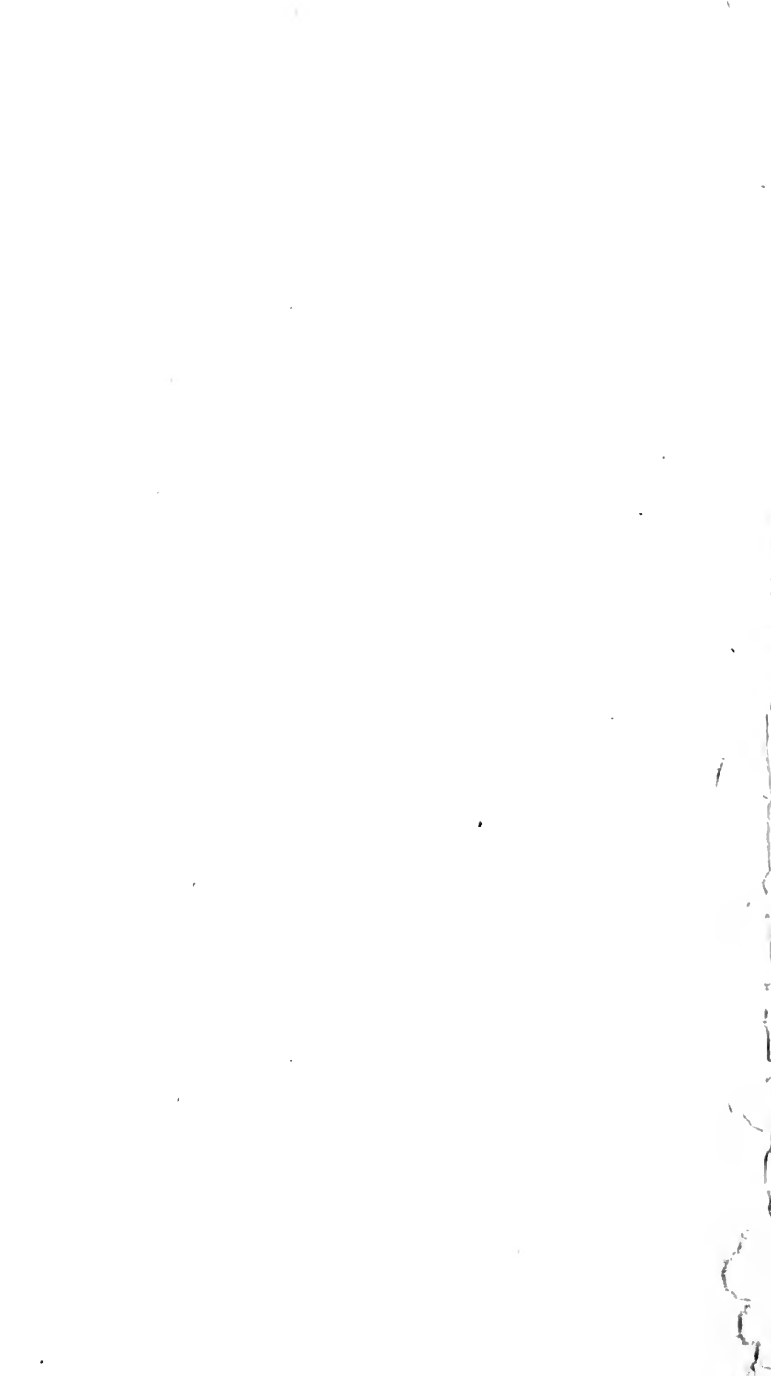
A

SOLEMN APPEAL

TO THE

COMMON SENSE OF THE NATION.

[PRICE ONE SHILLING AND SIXPENCE.]



A
S O L E M N A P P E A L
TO THE
GOOD SENSE OF THE NATION:
POINTING OUT THE IMMEDIATE NECESSITY OF A
C O R D I A L C O A L I T I O N
BETWEEN
THE KING AND THE PEOPLE;
IN ORDER TO ASSERT THE VIOLATED DIGNITY OF THE
CROWN, AND THE MAJESTY OF THE PEOPLE;
AND, BY A RESTORATION OF THE ANCIENT CONSTITUTION,
TO PRECLUDE THE POSSIBILITY OF
THIS COUNTRY'S BEING EVER GOVERNED BY A FACTION.

THIS IS NOT THE CAUSE OF FACTION, OR OF PARTY, OR OF ANY
INDIVIDUAL; BUT THE COMMON INTEREST OF EVERY MAN IN
BRITAIN.

JUNIUS.

L O N D O N :

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SOLEMN APPEAL, &c.

IT has long been a prevailing opinion, that, as Apathy pervades every order of the People, the Constitution is no longer worth contending for. Many real Patriots remain inactive from this idea, despairing to reclaim men matured in the habit of corruption, and who have degenerated, as they assert, into tame and abject slaves. But I am not one of those who think the Virtue of the People so extinguished by corruption, or their spirit so broken by calamity, as to justify despair; I attribute all our misfortunes---I attribute that system which has threatened the annihilation of Liberty, to a degenerated and corrupt Constitution---to a venal Parliament, and not to a nation of contented vassals. I admire the unequivocal proofs, which a brave people have exhibited to a gracious Sovereign, of their unshaken loyalty. Their conduct is an irrefragable evidence, if such evidence

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had

had been wanting, that the present complaints of the People are not the cry of a Faction, nor their grievances ideal; but that they are such as the dispassionate must feel, and the patriotic remedy. A wise Prince will attend to the voice of his People, and will not only consent to, but will support a Parliamentary Reform, which never can diminish his constitutional authority, but which must contribute to the real dignity of the Crown, and the prosperity of the people.

Many persons made the war a pretence for objecting to this Reformation; but that pretence ~~subsists~~^{exists} no longer, and so favourable an opportunity may never again occur of effecting it. We are now in so disordered a state, that nothing but an immediate and radical remedy can preserve our political existence.—Nothing but the instantaneous amputation of a lurking, a long neglected gangrene, which mounts insensibly to the seat of life, can snatch us from impending dissolution. A moment's delay must be fatal. The time calls loudly for calm and decisive deliberation. A dismembered and declining Empire, like a man of broken fortune, cannot afford the most trifling mismanagement. This once flourishing State should now guard against, and remedy those defects which plunged it into ruin: it should correct the errors that have crept into our Polity; improve the parts

which

which experience has evinced to be imperfect, and restore the spirit of our ancient Constitution.

I am well aware, that the enemies of the Parliamentary Reform will make the humiliating dilemma to which his Majesty has ~~been~~ lately *been* reduced, a pretence for their opposition • I can even conceive, that many men of public spirit and integrity may continue inactive upon this occasion, from a misapprehension of the ^{act} fact, and from a mistaken idea of moderation. But I trust I shall convince every man in the kingdom, who is open to conviction, that a Parliamentary Reform is the only measure that can snatch the Crown from degradation, and the People from vassalage.

The Father of Corruption, who, unfortunately for the Empire, presided for many years at the helm, had the effrontery to declare, that “ this country was governed by three Parties, “ and that a permanent Administration could “ not be formed without a coalition of two of “ them.” I again repeat, that such a declaration, by a man who avows a determined resolution to oppose the rights and wishes of the People, was effrontery in an unparalleled degree. Truth often comes to light by an impotent attempt to justify delinquency ; and perhaps this observation was never more happily exemplified, than

in Lord N——'s vindication of the Coalition. I am sorry to add, that he is but too well acquainted with our political situation, and that he may be safely credited, when, taken by surprise, he gives his evidence in favour of the Constitution.

Will the nation any longer tamely listen to, or be braved by an impudent avowal, that this country must be governed by "three Parties?" Will it not rather indignantly re-assert the ancient Constitution, annihilate corruption and party-factions, and neither leave the Crown nor the People dependent upon the casual honesty or caprices of any three Party-leaders in existence? We have all seen the effects of an abandoned Coalition between two of those Parties. At the most awful crisis of the Empire, the business of the nation has been suspended, and the Sovereign not only dictated to, but insulted. I deny that the late Vote of the Commons has been the voice of the People. No; it has been the language of self-interested Parties; and Lord N——'s declaration is my authority for saying so. What then must be the consequence, if the three Parties should coalesce? And, after the late Coalition, will any man pretend to assert, that such an event can never happen? Must not the constitutional powers of the Crown and of the People, in such a case, be
swallowed

swallowed up in an unprincipled oligarchy? Imperial Rome, once the Mistress of the World, owed her declension to a Triumvirate! Let us derive wisdom from her example, and secure our Liberties, before the present contending Parties shall confederate, and, confiding in their united strength, laugh at every opposition short of that horrible extremity—an Appeal to Arms.

It would be the height of insanity, to trust any longer to the professions of men, who only mean to mount into Power upon the shoulders of the People. When pretended friends league with open enemies, it is time to suspect treachery. We have nothing to hope from the virtue of some candidates for Popularity. But let not disunion between our quondam Leaders depress our ardour: it should rather animate us in the pursuit of our Rights, and point out the necessity of unanimity, firmness, and perseverance in the People: it should rather urge us on to redoubled exertions, and impel us to accomplish the salvation of our country, which, at this important moment, depends upon our virtue.

✱ All virtuous men should associate, to restore the ancient Constitution, the power of reforming which is indisputably their right, by whom, and for whom, it was first established. A vindication of it can never be considered as
 sedition;

fedition; nor will the Legislature ever justify discontent, by denying redress to the real grievances of an amenable and loyal People. Let us assert our rights with dignified moderation and manly firmness. The Irish Parliament derived the little Virtue they pretended to, from the animated example of the People, who not only supported, but urged them on to the pursuit of Independence and real Dignity. Let us in like manner compel our Parliament to act like Patriots: let us force them to become respectable: let us bar the doors of our Upper House against the minions of corruption; and let us preclude the possibility of corrupting our Representatives in the Commons. A Peerage Bill, short Parliaments, and equal Representation, are the only means of effecting so desirable a purpose, and cutting up venality by the roots. The one will be inadequate without the other; and he who refuses to support the three, is not sincere in his professions to serve the Public. Indeed all men should reprobate his conduct who opposes a Reform, the obvious tendency of which is to render both Houses of Parliament independent and respectable.

The Commoner who opposes a Peerage Bill, does not mean fairly by the People. If his ambition be laudable and popular, if he aspires to the rank of Nobility, let him attain it by honourable

honourable pursuits. Public services must always command that distinguished honour ; but it must cease to be an honour, or desirable, if prostituted as it has been.

The mode of rewarding those men with a Peerage, who have effrontery enough to call themselves the “ King’s Friends,” and address enough to make him think them so, though they are in truth only attached to his power, and are the worst enemies to him and to the Constitution, is such an abuse of the Prerogative, that I wish to see it arrested in its course, before it runs on to its own annihilation ; and before the power of the King and of the People shall be swallowed up in the too widely-extended gulph of Aristocracy.

Nothing but spirited and decided exertions on the part of the People can effect this desirable Reform, in opposition to the avowed disapprobation of veteran mercenaries, and the secret wishes of insidious friends. But while I recommend such exertions, I would not be understood to advise actual violence ; for force can never be justified but by unavoidable necessity. That should be the dernier resource, and never adopted but in cases of extremity. Unanimity, and a dignified perseverance, conducted with manly firmness, and qualified by moderation, will accomplish the wish of every patriot bosom.

Humble

Humble and respectful, but determined addresses to the Throne, and to the Parliament, entreating, or, if entreaties should prove ineffectual, insisting upon a restoration of our Rights, must unquestionably be complied with; for neither the King, nor the Parliament, will risque a diminution of their constitutional privileges by an obstinate exercise of an unconstitutional and usurped authority.

Let us then commence this business with the spirit becoming Freemen. We are deficient in courage, not in strength, to destroy the Hydra of Corruption. The danger is ideal, and the labour, when divided, will be far from Herculean. Let us not languish in a slavish inactivity. Corruption is to the Body Politic, as the dropsy to an individual. If a man be tapped for it before the stamina are dissolved, he may, by care and a proper regimen, not only recover his health, but even a vigor of Constitution; but if he timidly declines the operation, the disease gains ground, the water rises insensibly, suffocation ensues, and he falls the paltry victim of his cowardice. Let us not, like him, timidly wait the advances of dissolution, nor poorly shrink from the only cure that can preserve us.

Let us beseech, let us insist upon, a restoration of the ancient Constitution, upon which Septennial Parliaments, the present unequal
state

state of Representation, and an unlimited exercise of the prerogative in the creation of new Peerages are intolerable usurpations. Even after this Reform, the Crown will be possessed of more power than is strictly constitutional; and, notwithstanding the glorious efforts of our ancestors, will have acquired more in influence than it will lose in prerogative. Still the fountain of honors and employments, and still supported by a standing army, the riot act, and the tie of attachment which arises from the public funds, it will possess more power than is compatible with a limited Monarchy; and may therefore, without reluctance, resign the exercise of any usurped powers, which even the usage of ages cannot sanctify.

I am the last man in existence who would recommend an appeal to arms, or any intemperate assertion of our rights. Violence is unnecessary. Nothing is wanting but unanimity and perseverance. The fate of England depends upon the public spirit of the People, who, by associating in defence of their Constitutional Rights, by establishing Committees of Correspondence, by appointing Delegates to confer in a National Congress, and by peaceable exertions, may accomplish the Reformation so “devoutly to be wished.” There is not the most distant danger of ^aconvulsion, for there is a

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dignified

dignified energy in the calm but determined requisitions of the aggregate body of the People, which awes Majesty itself, and appals those paricides, who, considering St. Stephen's Chapel as an asylum, have fled to the altar of Prostitution for protection.

Nothing but the persevering firmness of the People, methodized and carried into execution by real Patriots, by men of integrity and abilities, by men who deservedly possess the public confidence, by men, who, superior to the dirty arts of politics, neither make a stalking horse of Popularity, nor fly into factious opposition for the purposes of low ambition and rapacity : nothing, I say, but spirited exertions, conducted by sincere, unanimous, and virtuous Leaders, can restore the Constitution. We have nothing to hope for from men who league with, whose chosen friends are the avowed opponents of a Parliamentary Reform, whose declarations upon this subject have been guarded and equivocal, and whose conduct encounters a leading principle of the Reform---the right of Constituents to instruct their Representatives.

Though we are now blest with a gracious Sovereign, who, in compassion to the distresses of an almost bankrupt nation, has condescended to retrench his expences, and set bounds to his
influence,

influence, he is not immortal. Let us therefore attempt a Reform before it shall be too late---before such a Prince as the King of Sweden shall mount the Throne---before we shall be habituated to slavery, and before the Royal influence can be effectually applied to the annihilation of Civil Liberty. Let us not degenerate into tame and abject slaves. Let us not betray a debasing apathy for our once glorious Constitution. Sleep is the harbinger of slavery : but I will rouse you, my Countrymen, from your lethargy, and awake you into action, till you shall associate in defence of your native legal rights, and re-establish the Constitution.

We are no longer to look up to an hardy Baronry for redress. The people must do justice to themselves. There is a recent and an animating instance in a Sister Kingdom, where the People, by unshaken perseverance, and unexampled moderation, have reformed the Constitution, though unsupported by a Parliament as venal and corrupt as ever disgraced that or any other country.

Supposing every County in England to be represented by men of the most independent principles, what comparison would they bear, what opposition could they make to the Swift mercenaries, who buy seats for Boroughs they

never saw, and come into Parliament with views of predetermined venality? To men who, too impatient for the decent forms of a seeming seduction, and apprehensive of neglect, make the first advances to a Minister, and solicit prostitution. While such notorious abuses prevail, any partial Reform will but procrastinate our political dissolution. Temporary and partial Reforms will never answer. Neither laws against bribery and corruption, nor to regulate elections, and reduce the influence of a Minister upon such occasions, will be effectual. I again affirm, that nothing less than the amputation of all its gangrened Members can preserve the Constitution. But even the disfranchisement of venal Boroughs, and an equal Representation of the People, will not restore its original purity and vigour, unless the duration of the trust shall be limited to a year, and unless a substantial Reform shall be adopted in the Upper House of Parliament.

A good and a wise King will always comply with the wishes of his People. He will neither set up nor conceive a separate interest from theirs : he will consider their happiness as his greatest glory, and pursue that object invariably : he will promote the prosperity of the Nation, by making public virtue and great abilities the only means by which honors and high
stations

stations can be acquired ; and he will engage the passions on the side of virtue, by making it men's interest to be virtuous. Such a Prince will establish his Throne in the hearts of his People, and, having obtained their confidence, may in reality possess more power than the most arbitrary Monarch ; for Popularity is the only permanent and constitutional foundation of sufficient regal authority in this country.

A Patriot King may annihilate Faction, and, supported by the confidence of a grateful People, smile at the impotent struggles of pseudo-patriots. No desperate combination can shake his constitutional authority, nor can a self-created Man of the People dictate to the real Friend and political Father of his Subjects. Henry the IV, notwithstanding the glaring defect of his title, conquered domestic opposition, and crushed every conspiracy by his courage and popularity. Nay, I am persuaded, that a Patriot King may again become the Arbiter of Europe ; for Unanimity in Britain could even yet accomplish every wish of National Ambition.

Armed with the confidence of his grateful and happy People, and thus possessed of more constitutional and unlimited powers than ever prerogative could bestow, a Patriot King can crush the most formidable Faction into atoms, and reign the respected Monarch of an United People.

ple. He will not afford an opportunity to broken gamblers—to men of desperate fortunes—to bankrupts in fame and fortune, to rise into consequence by their opposition to his Government. He will not, by a prostitution of the Royal Favor, enable an unprincipled and obnoxious Minister to fly in the face of his political Creator, and by an ungrateful confederacy with an insolent enemy, to dictate to his too credulous Sovereign. By eclipsing the popularity of pseudo-patriots, and withholding the rays of royal favor from traitors, the former will sink into insignificance; and the latter fall the victims of national indignation. Thus may the tranquility and glory of the Empire be restored, and the constitutional influence of the Crown not only be maintained, but increased, even after that æconomical reduction shall be effectually adopted, which the circumstances of an almost bankrupt nation have rendered indispensable.

Even if such a King had been so unhappy as to have listened to the arbitrary councils of insidious Favourites, by which, at the commencement of his reign, he had forfeited the affectionate attachment, or excited the jealous suspicions of his subjects, let his conduct but evince an unfeigned concern for the errors into which he has been betrayed, and he may, with-

out

out any humiliating concession, without any declaration in the smallest degree derogatory ~~to~~ ^{from} his dignity, regain that partial confidence, that zeal of loyalty which is the characteristic of Englishmen. Let him silence the turbulence of Factions by constitutionally calling upon his Subjects for their council and support. Let him learn the real sentiments of his People by a dissolution of Parliament ; and then no abandoned Coalition of adverse Parties (who, unanimous in their determined purpose to plunder this unhappy, this falling Country, sacrifice their political principles to each other, as the Roman Triumvirs did their friends) can ever shake the Constitutional Influence of the Crown, or dictate to the Sovereign.

On the other hand, the People cannot be too jealous of their Liberty ; for almost every barrier of Freedom has been sapt, and our Constitution, once considered as impregnable, has been long exposed to the inroads of Ambition. Corruption has levelled her bulwarks to the dust ; and we are more indebted to the Moderation of our Sovereign, than to the Virtue of Parliament, or the Advice of his old Ministers, that we ^{have been} ~~are~~ not enslaved. Perfidious Counsellors smoothed the way for Despotism, in order to extend their influence. But our gracious Sovereign was too wise to avail himself of an apparent

rent opportunity to overturn the Constitution of his Country. Let us therefore, lest his Successors should not be possessed of equal self-denial, guard against the surreptitious advances of Despotism; and rather prevent, than hereafter attempt to remedy so irretrievable a misfortune.

When we consider the present mockery of Representation; when we consider the misapplication of Secret Service Money; the influence of the Treasury; the Douceurs in the management of Loans and Contracts; the ~~an~~ increase of the Pension List; the multiplicity of Sinecure Employments; the prostitution of the Peerage and the different Orders ^{of knighthood}; the terror of a Standing Army; the operation of the Riot-Act; the ministerial appointment of County-Sheriffs; and the slavish attachment of the Monied Interest, lest the Public Funds should be affected by any struggle to preserve the Constitution; instead of being surprized at the amazing Influence of the Crown, we ought to be grateful for the moderation with which it has been exerted.

There was not so much probability, that the ambitious Swede should become a Despot, as that an English King, with arbitrary Principles, should triumph over the Liberties of this Country. An House of Commons like the present, constructed

constructed unconstitutionally, both in point of Representation and Duration; the unexampled prostitution of the Peerage, the infamous profusion of Public Money, and the barefaced evasion of the Law, which excludes Pensioners, during pleasure, from sitting in the Commons, are such circumstances as must alarm the most moderate man, who ~~was~~^{is} not acquainted with the private virtues of his Sovereign.

Our amiable Prince has been too long deluded by treacherous Ministers, and Pretended Friends. It is the business of his loyal Subjects to undeceive him. Let us respectfully approach the Throne, and represent the dangers which threaten the Constitution, if an aspiring Prince should wear the Crown, before the Reform in contemplation shall be effected. Let us beseech a gracious Monarch to exert his Royal influence in favour of a suffering People. Without such support we have little to expect from the virtue of Factions; and surely it is but reasonable to hope, that this influence will for once be employed for the advantage of the Community. The hour of national humiliation must inspire his Royal bosom with compassion, and the dismemberment of his Empire must point out the necessity of adopting every expedient which can contribute to the happiness and prosperity of his remaining dominions. A coalition

tion between the dependents of the Crown, and the friends of the People, must accomplish this Parliamentary Reformation, and bear down every opposition of the venal and self-interested.

Good Governments admit of changes in the superstructure, while the foundation remains unshaken and unchanged. Our Constitution, now the oldest in the world, could not have flourished for so many centuries, had not our ancestors altered or brought it back occasionally, as the exigency of times, or a change of popular manners, has seemed to demand an alteration. But indeed, the Reform so much to be desired, is not an innovation, but simply a renovation of the ancient Constitution.

Let us revert to first principles, and restore the spirit of the Constitution; but corruption must be annihilated before its original purity and simplicity can be revived. This is far from impracticable; for, though human nature cannot easily be changed, nor inveterate habits of venality be conquered, a corrupt bias may be corrected, or at least precluded from self-indulgence. There is no sin, where there is no temptation: we should therefore, withhold the means of Corruption, and impeach any Minister who attempts it.

It is a poor justification for a Minister, to plead the necessity of Corruption, when he him-
self

self creates that necessity. The great Lord Chatham, who succeeded to the Helm at as corrupt, and almost as calamitous an æra as the present, is a proof, that a Constitutional Minister will be Constitutionally supported ; and that Virtue in the Minister and Unanimity in the People, may, in spite of the incapacity and misconduct of preceding Administrations, change defeats into victory, general despondency into hope, and national humiliation into universal triumph and exultation. That Minister, therefore, deserves to lose his head, who adopts Corruption as a measure of Administration ; who spreads, instead of endeavouring to eradicate the contagion ; and who, rather than not succeed in any favourite plan of Government, would poison the Morals of a Nation. Lord Chatham never descended to corruption, nor cabals. He applied the Secret Service Money to the purposes for which it was intended—to bribe our enemies, and procure Foreign Intelligence. Though he never tampered with our Representatives, they were afraid to oppose the Man who possessed the confidence of their Constituents ; and he was supported by Parliament, till thwarted by a Secret Influence in the Cabinet.

Constituted as Parliaments now are, a Minister is no longer responsible for betraying the confidence of his Sovereign, or giving Councils inimical to his country. He is secure of protection.

tection. He needs but hint his wish to an obsequious Parliament, and it not only adopts and sanctifies his measures, but speaks the language he dictates : it utters his sentiments, and affects to advise, while it but slavishly echoes his commands. It studies to anticipate his secret wishes, and to comply with those which he is so *gracious* as to intimate. It indemnifies his incapacity or treachery ; and, instead of being what it once was, the Temple of Liberty, it is become an asylum for those parricides, who would destroy it.

It is false and absurd ; it is an abuse of terms, to call the Commons the Representatives of the People, when a majority of them is returned by less than six thousand Electors, and they too the most venal, the very refuse of the People. Our pretended Representatives are therefore little more than the Puppets of a Minister *. The virtual Representation of the People in the Commons is as great a mockery of common sense, as the assertion that the Americans were
virtually

* While all the Freeholders in Great Britain return but ninety-two Members, three hundred and sixty-nine Members are chosen by forty-one thousand Electors : half the Commons are returned by five thousand seven hundred and twenty three Electors ; and a ninth part of the *Representatives* of the *People* are chosen by three hundred and sixty-four voters.

virtually represented. It is notorious, that none of the funded and little of the Commercial Interest of England is represented ; and the Representation of the Landed Interest is so disproportioned and inadequate, as scarcely to deserve that title.

Wales was never taxed till represented ; for, even in arbitrary reigns, Parliament was ashamed to tax those who, not having even nominal Representatives, could not be said to have consented to the taxation. This is a proof, if any proof had been wanting, that equal Representation is the Essence of the Constitution. The People have a right to demand it, and it is the interest of the King and of the Parliament to comply ; for men, who now groan under an enormous weight of taxes, would submit to them with less reluctance, if imposed by their real Representatives.

Yet, though Lord N——, when he advised the prosecution of the War, and the reduction of America to “ Unconditional submission,” declared, in his justification, that “ the Americans had no more reason to complain, than multitudes in England, who, though not represented, were still liable to taxes ;” I say, though this fatal doctrine exasperated and lost us America, this *virtuous* Statesman means to make the same experiment at home ; and, lest
his

his favourite system of Corruption should ever receive a check, has avowed his determined resolution to spread disaffection through his Majesty's Dominions, rather than accede to a Reform, which is at once the wish, and the legal right of the People.

Should a beggarly Borough, which perhaps has dwindled into the private property of an unprincipled individual, delegate as much power to its Representatives as a rich, populous, and extended County? What can be more preposterous, than that a venal Borough, consisting of Twelve Burgeffes (and many Boroughs have not even that number) should return two Members to Parliament, while some of the most flourishing Towns in England are not represented? What can be more preposterous, than that a petit Cornish Borough can send two Representatives to Parliament, while Westminster or Middlesex can send no more? Are the People equally represented, while the Premier for the time being, can return almost Fifty Members without opposition? Are the People equally represented, when an Asiatic Plunderer, who buys a Seat in Parliament, to support, and be supported by the Minister, enjoys an equal legislative Authority with Sir George Savile, the Property of whose Constituents is nearly equal
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to the united Property of all the Boroughs in the kingdom ?

Many poor Boroughs were relieved by Queen Elizabeth from the burthen of sending Members to Parliament ; while richer Towns obtained Charters, and were erected into Corporations. If then the poverty of a Borough was a justification for its Disfranchise, is not Venality a more cogent and substantial one ? If the accommodation of a petit Borough could justify such a measure, and that too by the single authority of the Prerogative, how much more justifiable must it appear, that the whole Nation should be gratified, and that the Parliamentary Reform should be carried into Execution, by the joint Concurrence of every Branch of the Legislature ?

It affords matter of melancholy reflection, to hear of Borough Proprietors, without shame or delicacy, disposing of Seats in Parliament to the highest Bidder ; insomuch, that a General Election, instead of a solemn Act of State, is little better than a general Auction of Venal Boroughs. If an unfaithful Delegate be ignominiously discharged by his Constituents, and rejected as a dishonest Agent for the People, he may buy a Seat in Parliament at the Expence of the Nation, (for he will be re-imburfed by the Wages of Prostitution) and re-invest him-
self

self with as much legislative Authority as the Approbation of his Constituents could confer.

Let us for ever put a stop to the repetition of such Abuses; let us for ever put a stop to so Anti-constitutional a proceeding as selling a seat in Parliament; but let us not, however, break in upon private property. When Boroughs have degenerated into such infamous insignificance as to become a transferable private property, though the abuse deserves exemplary punishment, let them only be disfranchised; let the Burgesses, though not Freeholders, be still qualified to vote for County Members, and let some compensation be made to the Proprietors. Many Boroughs have long been considered as Estates, and, as such, included in Marriage Settlements. Though originally a vile Abuse, Usage gives a sort of Property. I would therefore recommend a pecuniary Equivalent to the present Possessors of Private Boroughs, which shall be suppressed for the public good; for some of the present Proprietors are free from guilt, though their Ancestors, who first usurped such Property, were the worst of Traitors.

An increase of Members, without increasing the controul of the Constituents, and shortening the Duration of the Trust, would only increase the moral Depravity and enormous Expence

pence of the Nation. The present number of Members is fully adequate to every purpose of Legislation. The unequal mode of electing them is the great Grievance complained of, which may be easily remedied by subdividing the Counties into a number of Districts proportioned to their Population; each District to contain an equal number of Electors. Such a Reform in the Representation, together with Annual Parliaments, would put a stop to every species of Corruption; Riot and Confusion would be avoided, and undue Influence would cease. This would take in and relieve all descriptions of persons. Copy-holders, Bishop's Tenants, Artizans, and even Cottagers, would be represented. The Natural Interest, Men of Character and Property, who have a permanent Interest in the State, would be returned. Our Government would then be an equal Government, because every man would have a share in it, and consent by his proxy to every measure of the Legislature; and our Constitution would be free in reality as well as name.

Antecedent to the reign of Henry the Eighth Parliaments were always elected annually; but that arbitrary Prince was guilty of many Usurpations upon the Rights of the People. The ancient Constitution was in some degree revived

at the Restoration: for, in order to prevent a repetition of those abuses, which his deluded Father had committed, the Second Charles was compelled to assent to the Law for Triennial Parliaments. The same Law was confirmed at the Revolution, for there is in the Bill of Rights an express Stipulation for short Parliaments, which are a fundamental part of the Constitution, of which Septennial Parliaments are a scandalous innovation.

And But Sir Robert Walpole, the Grand Missionary of Corruption, well knowing that short and frequent Parliaments must, from their nature, be incorruptible, and the Scourge of Ministers, took the advantage of the attachment of the English Nation to the illustrious House of Hanover; conjured up a popular panic of the Pretender, and, by all the low intrigues of politics, all the manœuvres of Corruption, violated the very Essence of the Constitution, and carried the Septennial Bill, which he considered as tantamount to an Act of Indemnity. He well knew that he had nothing to fear from a self-created Parliament; from Men who had betrayed the Trust reposed in them by the People; who had extended that Trust from three to seven years, and who, with equal Justice, might have extended it for Life.

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But as our gracious Sovereign well knows that the People were induced to submit to so daring an Encroachment upon their Rights, by their attachment to his Family, I am persuaded that he will reward their Loyalty ; and that he will not only restore those Rights which they waved upon that Occasion, but that he will even lend his Countenance to a re-establishment of the ancient Constitution, by the revival of Annual Parliaments. In that case the Public Liberties will be founded upon a rock : the Interests of the King and of the People will *again* be thought inseparable, and that easy, confidential Intercourse will be maintained, which is so essential to the prosperity of the Empire.

Even supposing (though I pledge myself to prove the contrary) that Septennial Parliaments were Constitutional, and that the extent of Prerogative in the Creation of new Peerages was indefinite, we have a right to demand a Reform, for the Majesty of the People is superior to that of the three Estates united. From them, under Heaven, all Legislative Authority is derived ; and whenever it is abused, they have a right to model it anew or to revoke it.

Could the King, Lords and Commons re-establish the Feudal System, or introduce any innovation into the Constitution, without the consent and against the wishes of the people ?

Certainly not: for the King is no more than their first Magistrate; the Lords their Hereditary Council; and the Commons their more immediate Representatives. Even the two first derive their authority under an implied trust from the People, and enjoy their elevated ranks upon condition of ^{political} ~~national~~ service and support. The public welfare is the *sine quâ non* of civil Government, which is specifically dissolved when that principle is violated. The trust ceases upon any infringement of it; and the right of Re-election or Reform is again vested in the People.

But had it even been otherwise, and had our ancestors been base enough to surrender their own liberties, such an act of infamy could not be binding upon their posterity. Every human being has an unquestionable right to Freedom, and all Nations which aspire to it must be free. Even the regions of Despotism could recover their Liberties, if they could be taught to prize them. Let us who have been bred up in the habits of considering Freedom as the greatest blessing, continue to cherish our love for it into enthusiasm. Let us emulate the glorious examples of our ancestors, value our Liberties as they did, and never forego them but with life. Let us be dutiful, affectionate, and amenable subjects; but, in our obedience to the Legislature,

ture, let us not forget our Loyalty to the Constitution. Let us guard it with the utmost veneration, and beware lest the subtlety of an Ulysses should steal away our Palladium, and leave us a defenceless prey to our enemies. Let us watch it incessantly : and if, from the ravages of time or of corruption, it shall be found to want repair, let us adhere to first principles in repairing it.

Rational Loyalty does not prescribe a tame submission to any usurped or unconstitutional authority, or exercise of such authority ; but, in cases of extremity, points out the duty of Resistance, if the Constitution cannot be restored without it. The proofs that the Constitution has been violated should indeed be incontestable, before so frightful an expedient as Resistance to Government shall be adopted : and the only justifiable juncture ^{for} ~~of~~ such Resistance is, when the probable mischiefs of a slavish and implicit obedience, with respect to the community at large, exceed those of a temperate but determined Opposition.

Though the Septennial Bill received the sanction of the King, Lords and Commons, it was and is illegal, because an infamous breach of trust and a violation of the Constitution. But had it even been justified by necessity, at the time it was enacted, the continuance of it at
this

this day is an intolerable grievance. In the reign of Richard the Second, a profligate Parliament repealed, or rather impotently attempted to repeal, the Constitution, by declaring the King to be above the Laws; which was to change a limited into an absolute Monarchy. In the reign of Henry the Eighth too, the encroachments of Prerogative were established by the sanction of a corrupt Parliament, which enacted that the King's Proclamation should have the force of an Act of Parliament. England has often been visited with such Kings and such Parliaments; but could their united endeavours rescind the established Laws of the Constitution? Certainly not. The Spirit of the People restored its violated form, and wrested their inalienable Rights from the hands of Despotism.

Short and frequent Parliaments, in which the People are equally represented, instead of affording an asylum to, would be the terror of bad Ministers. They would speak the Language of their Constituents, and keep up a proper communication between the Sovereign and his People. No favourite could or would then dare to poison the Royal Ear, or create jealous dissensions between the King and his Subjects. He would not then have time to corrupt any Representative who pretended to
common

common honesty, nor could either the Minister or his Minions successfully contest an election with a popular Candidate. Thus would the venal adventurer be excluded from any share in the Legislature, and the People be represented by men of character and property.

If the delegated trust was to cease at the expiration of a year, the Candidate could not afford to bribe the Voter, nor the Minister the successful Candidate, so high as to amount to a temptation. But a seat for seven years appears a sort of tenure for life, and, therefore, worth the highest purchase. The venal consider it as such, and, secure of a re-imbursement, give any price for a seat in Parliament. Actuated by principles of premeditated venality, they become veterans in corruption; and thus, though nominally free, we are in truth, the slaves of a Minister, through the medium of a corrupt Parliament, the only instrument by which this country can ever be enslaved.

If the Representatives be not returned by the Body of the People; if they hold their Trust by what may be almost called a Life-tenure, and deny the controul, or refuse to obey the instructions of their Constituents, instead of being Trustees, they assume the authority of Masters. It was a maxim of the great Lord Burleigh's, that " England can never be un-
done,

“ done, unless by her own Parliaments.”—
 When, therefore, the love of Liberty has been nearly extinguished by Venality and Corruption, nothing can snatch this country from perdition but reverting to first principles, and re-infusing that spirit of Independence and equal Liberty into the People, which once made this country the first Empire in the world.

There is so much time for seduction in a term of seven years, that it is too often immaterial which Candidate is returned ; and thus the voters, from frequent disappointment and despair, become almost as venal as their Representatives. Let all temptations therefore be removed. Let representation be equal, and the trust be short. Let the People be no longer oppressed by taxes to bribe their Representatives. Let the doors of the Upper House be barred against them. Let Parliament cease to be a Court of Record, either to register the edicts, or screen the delinquency of a Minister ; and let us no longer acquiesce in the present corrupt mode of Election, which is little more than a privilege vested (to speak comparatively) in a few to elect agents for the community ; and to sell a power instead of conferring a trust.

If the Commons were conscious that they meant fairly by their constituents, and were entitled

entitled to popular confidence, they would neither oppose Annual Parliaments, nor an Equal Representation. If they aspired to real dignity and consequence, they would not oppose a Peerage Bill. But they ~~were~~^{are} too tenacious of their own usurped privileges, and too anxious to accomplish their schemes of private avarice and ambition, to serve the People effectually.

How apparent is the corruption of Parliament, from the authority of its own Journals? In compliance with the requisitions and remonstrances of the People, it declared, upon the Motion of Mr. Dunning (now Lord Ashburton) “ that the Influence of the Crown had “ encreased, was encreasing, and ought to be “ diminished.” But when the Minister applied that influence, how soon did it counteract the momentary gust of Patriotism and sense of duty to the People! How ridiculous! how inconsistent! how contradictory were its subsequent proceedings! How soon did the Patriot glow, which distinguished its commencement, feel the chilling influence of Venality! How infamously did it fritter away that vote! Where then is the boasted security of Parliament? Alas! it is no more; and we now only enjoy the name and shadow of the Constitution. Self, not the General interest, reigns the governing

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principle

principle in every branch of the Legislature; and a lucrative employment, or a degraded title, is considered as an ample compensation for the Rights of the People.

I deny that we were indebted for the change of ^{*the War*} Administration to the virtuous Independence of Parliament. Misfortunes and disgrace in every corner of the empire had awakened the indignation of the people. The then Ministry saw the gathering storm, and wisely retired into port. They compounded with Opposition, suffered themselves to be left in a Minority, and resigned them their employments. The nation for a moment was the dupe of this collusion; but at last the juggle became manifest. The threatened thunder of Impeachments was heard no more; and the public Plunderers were not only permitted to enjoy the fruits of their rapacity and speculation in security, but two of them received the sanction of Parliament, to hold over half a million of the public Money*. So *tenacious* are our *virtuous* Representatives of the rights and property of their constituents.

How preposterous, how impious is it then to talk of the Omnipotence of Parliament, and that too after its real dignity is lost; when
it

* Mr. F—— made this a sort of Family question, and accordingly supported them.

it is become the execration of its constituents, and the contempt of Europe! If that expression be suitable to any part of the English Government, it is to the Minister, who could extinguish the love of Liberty in the breast of Englishmen, and not only metamorphose them into slaves, but into instruments † of slavery.

During the whole administration of Lord North, it sat, like a French Parliament, to register his edicts, with this unessential difference, that the mockery of free debate was still ~~continued~~ ^{reduced to} Opposition; while the Minister, relying upon a decided Majority, seldom condescended to support his measures by argument, but referred the merits of every question to the Book of Numbers. So indecently was the dignity of Parliament debased, and even appearances disregarded. Must not such degeneracy in the Legislature afflict every patriot bosom, and animate the Sons of Freedom to attempt a Reformation?

When ⁿ~~the~~ the spirit of the Constitution is thus exhaled, may not Parliaments, unless their powers be limited and ascertained, become a dangerous implement in the hands of some future Monarch, and embolden him to acts which the greatest Despot would not hazard without their sanction? The same man, who,

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when

† Alluding to the American war

when supported by the laws has the intrepidity of a lion, has often betrayed cowardice when acting in opposition to them. Thus, while the shadow of the Constitution is preserved, a seeming adherence to its principles may at some future day, in an arbitrary reign, appear to warrant measures which would once have endangered even the life of Royalty.

In the infancy of the Constitution, when our Senators were untainted by luxurious vices; when prostituted and pensioned Parliaments were unheard of, and the baneful system of corruption introduced by Sir Robert Walpole, was equally impracticable and unknown, Parliament was indeed the Palladium of Liberty. But formed, as it now too generally is, of men without any attachment beyond themselves; of men, who, with unblushing venality, insatiable avarice, and low ambition, have no object but the emoluments of office, or the attainment of a degraded title: thus formed, I say, rather the Brat of the Treasury, than the legitimate Child of the People, it is a formidable battery turned against that very Liberty, for the defence of which it was originally erected. But I trust that it will soon be recovered by the constitutional efforts of the people, who must triumph over Borough Mercenaries, by cutting off the sources of corruption. Nothing less than ~~the~~ spirited,

spirited, the persevering exertions of the People can achieve this victory, and nothing less than such a victory can preserve the Liberties of this country.

I again repeat, that, as Parliaments are now constituted, an aspiring Monarch may accomplish all his plans of ambition, and adopt measures which he would never hazard had the whole odium been to fall singly upon himself. Suppose some future Prince, concealing his views beneath the specious semblance of moderation and piety, and to give a colour to his measures, should declare an implicit confidence in the councils of his Parliament. What resource; what protection have the people against the designs of a Prince who acts upon principles so apparently constitutional, if it be admitted, that the joint authority of the Legislature is in all cases unlimited? They may execrate the Parliament; they may remonstrate against the Minister; but, intrenched behind his Parliament and his prerogative, such a Prince might be deaf to their complaints, and smile at the impotence of their Remonstrances, till some dreadful convulsion puts a stop to his usurpations. The wholesome lesson of Instruction, which the historic page affords, of Tyrants deposed, and Empires overturned, will be unattended

attended to in the ambitious career of the King and the profligate corruption of his Parliament.

Venal and voluntary slaves themselves, the Representatives will forge chains for their Constituents without a scruple, and precipitate the downfall of the State by the most destructive measures that ever disgraced civil policy, if the people have not virtue enough to oppose them : to prescribe the limits of their authority, and at once to protest against and reform the abuses of the Legislature. They will otherwise become not only the tools but the ostensible advisers of oppression ; and the Commons, once the Bulwark of Liberty, will be converted into the strongest fastness of despotism.

Our only constitutional mode of punishing bad Ministers is by Parliament, but if the majority of Parliament be venal, it confirms instead of preventing usurpation. ~~A~~ A Parliament of Placemen and Pensioners, like a packed jury, will be but too ready to acquit the greatest traitor. To talk of impeachment with an House of Commons constructed like the present, is an insult to common sense. A waiter or a shoe black, ^{who} ~~may~~ by meanness, rapacity and villainy, ^{has} ~~amass~~ ^{ed} a fortune in Asia, may buy a Seat in Parliament for a Borough he never saw, and ^{be} ~~is~~ then called a Representative of the People. It is well known that the Nabobs, particularly during

during Lord N—th's Administration, made their peace by purchasing a number of Seats in Parliament, and supporting the Minister. Thus was the nation disgraced and ruined ; while a band of Eastern and domestic plunderers formed a firm phalanx and baffled all the generous struggles of an injured and indignant People.

So absolutely did Lord N—th and his associates conceive Parliament to be at their devotion, that they repeatedly undertook to answer for and become its sponsors ; nay, after they had voluntarily and under a secret compromise of non-impeachments retired from the impending storm of national resentment, and consented to be left in a minority, as an excuse for their resignation : When * an unshaken Patriot of the Administration which succeeded them made a motion to call Messrs. R—by and Ell--s to an account for an immense arrear of the public money, they had the impudence to avow their having convened their friends and partizans, and assembled a faction to oppose it.

The issue of this motion proved the extent of their influence : for, though all the virtuous and independent county Members supported Mr. Lee, the Members for rotten Boroughs, and all the other minions of corruption successfully

• Mr. Lee.

opposed

opposed him. The question was decided by numbers, and not by that weight which should arise from superior wisdom, integrity and property. That part of the Representative Body which is not elected by the people: that part which is a corruption of, and repugnant to, the spirit of the Constitution, prevailed upon this as upon every occasion against the wishes and the interest of the nation. Is it possible then to conceive a stronger proof of the abuses and the danger of rotten Boroughs than their affording an asylum to the sons of speculation both at home and abroad? Yes—there is a stronger: for, in many cases, they not only screen delinquents from punishment, but procure titles and rewards for the worst men in the Empire.

In order ^{therefore} to preserve the ^{dignity of} Parliament and the Liberties of the People, it is necessary to restrain the prostitution of national honour, and to confine the Prerogative within reasonable limits.

The creation of a number of Peers without the consent of Parliament is an usurpation, and by no means a Constitutional branch of the Prerogative. Antecedent to the reign of Henry the Third, a seat in the Upper House was incidental to certain feudal tenures, and the Lords sat in Parliament in right of their possessions; but at the close of his reign he created
Barons

Barons by writ in order to exclude the lesser Barons.

Among the many creations of Peers between the eleventh of Edward the Third, and the First of Henry the Seventh, they all, except a few grants of escheated feudal honours, were made and passed by authority of and in full Parliament. That contemptible tyrant Richard the Second, was the first who created Barons by patent, but the practice was discontinued upon the accession of Henry the Fourth, his immediate successor. Indeed from the time of Henry the Third to the reign of the Seventh Henry, there was no creation by patent without the consent of Parliament ; but since that day, the Crown has exercised this usurped branch of the Prerogative, a Prerogative which the immortal Henry the Fifth never ventured to exercise, though the reward of his gallant followers might have justified such a measure. Indeed the custom of reading patents in the House of Lords, before the patentees are admitted to act as Barons, not only implies, but evinces a right in the Lords to deny their assent ; and though this right has been ^{come} obsolete from disuse, it has never been formally relinquished.

The King could formerly, by virtue of a similar usurpation of Prerogative, establish any number of new Boroughs. Edward the Sixth

incorporated twenty-two; Queen Mary fourteen; Queen Elizabeth thirty-one; and James the First fourteen. But the nation was at last alarmed at the ^{intention} ~~conduct~~ of this practice, (for the Crown then assumed as unlimited a power to erect Boroughs as it now does to create Peers) and therefore put a stop to it for ever.

The abuse of Prerogative by too lavish a creation of the Peerage, was ^{exhibit} ~~exhibited~~ as an article of impeachment against the Duke of Buckingham, Lord Oxford and many other Ministers: and, if the clause in the Act of Settlement, which prescribes that “every
“ Minister shall sign with his name any advice
“ he gives his Sovereign,” had been adhered to, I should not despair to see that Minister brought to condign punishment, who contrived to make the Government of the best of Princes contemptible; and who insulted the Hereditary Council of the nation by recommending a prostitution of the Peerage.

If the King, in order to carry a favorite measure, can create any number of Peers he pleases, he may command his point, ⁱⁿ and swallow up that branch of the Legislature. It is a well known saying of George the Second's, that “could his Friend gain him over an House of Commons, he would throw his Troop of Guards into the House of Lords, rather than miscarry

miscarry in his measures." As therefore we have but too many proofs that corruption can effect the former, what may we not apprehend, should the Royal Prerogative, with respect to the Peerage, be unlimited? Should the exercise of that authority continue unquestioned, must it not endanger, if not subvert the Constitution? Must not the Constitutional Power of the Lords be lost, in this unconstitutional power of the Crown? Must not the undecided virtue of the Commons yield to the joint assaults of pecuniary and honorary temptations? Must not a Prince with a Parliament so entirely at his devotion, become more absolute than any Monarch in Europe? And wherein consists the difference, whether the King can issue his mandate like a Despot, or through the medium of an obsequious Parliament? If there be a difference, it is that the Tyranny of an English Sovereign, whose conduct is apparently sanctified by the empty forms of the Constitution, is much more secure and formidable, than that of any Despot in the universe.

Prerogative was originally intended by the Constitution as a sacred deposit for the advantage of the Community. Like the power of the Dictator, it was never to be exercised except in cases of emergency. But it has been so long and fatally misapplied, that the term is

justly become obnoxious. It has therefore been discontinued in all cases, when^{re} the encrease of the Royal Influence has rendered the exercise of it unnecessary. But, as the abuse of the first is manifest from the Peerage List, and the extent of the latter from the Resolutions of Parliament, what have we not to fear if universal venality and moral depravity, the offspring of luxury ^{and} dissipation, shall become their auxiliaries?

Let us then prevent such evils while we may : let not usage lend a sanction to usurpation. Let us not listen to the narrow prejudices of those cold and superficial politicians, who tremble at the Idea of reforming the Constitution, and who, like bigots in religion, would rather persevere in glaring errors, than improve a system, which has been too visibly impaired by Corruption. It is now time to question the Legality of a Power, which was always alarming, but which is now intolerable. We should recollect that not only our own, but the Liberties of Posterity may depend upon our exertions. We should recollect that not only our Independence as Individuals, but that the Independence of the Nation, may hang upon our decisive firmness at this awful period ; and, remembering that all future Kings, may not possess the virtuous self-denial of our present

Gracious

Gracious Sovereign, we should persevere in our endeavours, till we have brought back the Constitution to its original purity.

In the year 1719, George the First, the Royal Ancestor of his present Majesty, graciously waved this pretended branch of the Prerogative. By a Message to the Lords, he desired them to proceed upon the Peerage Bill, which had been introduced by the Duke of Somerset, as he wished to establish the Peerage upon such a footing as to render them respectable. This Bill ^{was} unfortunately lost in an ambitious House of Commons; but I trust that our present Sovereign will lend an indulgent ear to the wishes of his People, and afford an opportunity to his faithful Commons, to redeem their character with their Constituents, and attest their Loyalty to him by their ready acquiescence.

Let then a Peerage Bill be introduced, which shall not encroach upon such an exercise of the Prerogative as is warranted by the ancient Constitution, and is adequate to the wishes of a Patriot Monarch. Let it limit the number of the Lords, and restrain the King from occasional Creations in order to obtain a majority: but let the Crown continue to be the Fountain of Honour, and still retain the power to create a new Peerage upon the extinction

tion of an old one. The stream in that case will again flow pure and unpolluted, and a Title will once more become an object of ambition. The extinction of noble families and the different orders of Knighthood, will afford sufficient opportunities to a good King, to gratify the meritorious claimants to Royal Favour: and, in cases of extraordinary desert, a grateful Parliament and an applauding Nation, may Address his Majesty to confer the honour of Peerage upon such men as have distinguished themselves in the service of their Country.]

Power must always follow property. If the Upper House can be augmented *ad infinitum*, by men of the largest fortunes in the Commons, an Aristocracy may be established by the encreasing accession of property, and the Influence of the Commons must be lost. If any number of men, whose incomes are inadequate to the support of their dignity, can, upon any occasion be ennobled, they must become Pensioners from necessity. In both cases the Liberties of the People are endangered; for the first must diminish their Constitutional Importance and establish an Aristocracy; the last must encrease the Influence of the Crown, spread the contagion of Corruption, and load the Nation with a band of Noble Pensioners. Even now the Peers can return near 200 of the Commons;

mons; what then must be the consequence, if they be strengthened by the first remaining properties in the Lower House, but that it shall be swallowed up in and become dependant upon the Lords?

Many of the Lords are already too poor to support their rank, and others are likely to become so by their prodigality. But even after their incomes shall be impaired by mortgage, their Borough and County interest will be a permanent property, which they may dispose of to the Minister or his Candidates*. Being too luxurious, and too corrupt to aspire to independence, they will sink into pensioners while there is a guinea in the Treasury to corrupt them; but, when that shall be exhausted, they will dictate to their Sovereign, and rise from obsequious slaves into insolent tyrants.

Thus the dignity and constitutional Influence of the Crown; thus the Majesty and the civil Liberties of the People will be finally lost, while the spirit having evaporated, only
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* By a proper attention to the dignity and independence of Parliament, George Nevil, Duke of Bedford, having wasted his fortune, was, in the reign of Edward the IVth, degraded for his poverty: but at this day a Peer, however unable or unwilling to support his dignity, cannot be degraded, and accordingly descends into the pensioned drudge of any and every Administration.

the *caput mortuum* of the Constitution will remain. Thus, while the late ruinous system of corruption can be pursued, the Legislative will merge in the Executive power; but when the means of corruption shall cease, the executive and popular branches of the Legislature must be swallowed ^{up} in the gulph of Aristocracy. In both cases the People will be worse than cyphers, for they will be enslaved. Let us prevent such evils while we may, for antidotes are greatly preferable to precarious remedies.

What but the oppressions of an Aristocracy, to which even the most unlimited Monarchy is comparative freedom, first reconciled Denmark and Sweden to the usurpations of Despots? Fired with indignation at the oppressive and intolerable insolence of the Nobles, the People voluntarily surrendered their Liberties into the hands of their Sovereign, rather than submit to the licentious petit tyrannies of their fellow subjects. Too great authority in the hands of Nobility, has accelerated the Declension of many Empires, nor does history afford a single instance of its having ever been exercised with moderation. For (as Doctor Price in his excellent Treatise upon Civil Liberty observes) "There is a chance, that in the quick Succession of Despots, a good one will sometimes arise.

But

But bodies of Men continue the same, and have generally proved the most unrelenting of all Tyrants."

I am by no means a man of levelling principles. I respect the Constitutional Rights and Privileges of the Nobility, and wish to restore it to its original Dignity. I wish to exclude Persons from a Participation of that Rank who have no pretensions to it, except the Wages of Prostitution. I wish to exclude those who, in a time of general distress, and almost National Bankruptcy, voted for the Continuance of a ruinous War, by which they were amassing Princely Fortunes. I wish to exclude both Domestic and Asiatic Plunderers. I wish to exclude Paymasters, Navy Treasurers, Contractors, and the whole Tribe of Peculation, from a Seat in the Hereditary Council of the Nation. I pant to rescue the Ancient Nobility from being disgraced, and the Liberties of my Country from being endangered by any further Prostitution of the National Honours. And I am persuaded, that the only expedient to effect such desirable purposes is a Peerage Bill, which shall prohibit the Creation of a new Peerage, except upon the extinction of an old one, or upon the Addresses of Parliament to the Throne, recommending that Reward for some distinguished Public Service.

H

Titles

Titles were originally intended as Rewards to those who had distinguished themselves in the Service of their Country, and they accordingly excited a laudable Emulation. But now such Honors are seldom conferred for virtuous Actions, or public Services*. The Temple of Fame was once the only Passage to exalted Rank: there the Candidates for Honors applied for their Credentials; but the Certificate of Mammon has of late years been infinitely more successful. No man can respect Commerce more than I do. There are not more respectable men upon earth than the Merchants of England; many of whom are eminent for their Liberality, Generosity, and Patriotism. I reverence Commerce as a principal Source of National Importance; and I rejoice in the Aggrandizement of many amiable Individuals who pursue it. But I execrate the system of a Government, which must ultimately establish a National Selfishness, Venality and Avarice, by making Wealth, though unadorned by any Merit, a certain road to Honors.

Where Riches alone lay a Foundation for Honors and Respect, the noble Ardour of the Soldier is depressed: the Patriot Enthusiasm is extinguished; all virtuous Emulation

* There have been a few Exceptions to this Assertion since the Resignation of Lord N—th, in 1782.

ceases ; the road to Glory is deserted, and every man applies his talents to amass that wealth, which, in this age of impurity, can alone secure Distinctions. Who but a Quixote will now pursue the phantom Honor through the steep and rugged road of danger, when honors can be more easily and certainly obtained by a supple devotion to the corrupt maxims of a Court ? The gallant veteran, who has often fought and bled for his country, after having distinguished himself by his zeal, intrepidity, and conduct, when he returns, crowned with never-dying laurels, is disgraced by a paltry Knighthood : by the very title bestowed as a bribe upon any peddling dealer, who having risen to the rank of Sheriff, by the suffrages of his Fellow Citizens, betrays that sacred trust, and becomes the unprincipled drudge of any infamous Administration. Is not an equal rank with such a reptile rather an insult than reward ; and must not the ill-requited soldier blush with honest indignation, when forced to yield precedence to the very refuse and dishonor of humanity ? The more substantial honors of a Peerage (if prostituted as they have been, they may still be called so) are reserved as douceurs for the Minions of Corruption, for the slaves who have betrayed, and not the heroes who have defended their country.

Judge Blackstone (speaking of the Upper House) calls them “ An Aristocratical Assembly of Persons selected for their piety, their birth, their wisdom, their valour, and their property.” I shall not pretend to decide, whether he means to enumerate what are or what ought to be the requisites for so exalted a dignity ; but, in my humble apprehension, if such requisites be dispensed with, a King may debase Nobility, but cannot exalt the low minions of corruption. The man who owes his rank to meanness and venality, derives no dignity from a station which he disgraces, but is in truth more contemptible than the lowest Plebeian he despises. It is true, he may borrow a local consequence from the stamp of Royalty, but he will find that it cannot give currency beyond a certain district ; for any greater respect to high rank and titles than is due to their virtues who obtain them, or than is essential to the maintenance of good Government, is preposterous, and as such, will never be conceded to a coronet unadorned by Merit ; at least, not by men of sense, independence, and public spirit.

The Lords are an hereditary Council *ad consulendum et defendendum Regem*. Should men therefore, whose principles are inimical to Liberty, and whose cowardice renders them incapable of maintaining their own honour, be considered

sidered as fit guardians of the honor of their Sovereign? Should men, whose integrity is far from unimpeached, be appointed the perpetual Jurors of the ancient Nobility, who, by the law of the land, are to be tried by their Peers, but cannot challenge any one of them? Are not the Lords therefore deeply interested in the creation of new Peerages? Should men who never pretended to veracity be created Peers, since, by a preposterous privilege, the honor of a Nobleman is considered in many cases ^{as} tantamount to the oath of a private Gentleman? Thus, independent of that legislative authority, which it is highly dangerous to entrust in the hands of men who are devoid of principle, the King may be deluded by treacherous and pusillanimous counsellors; the life and honor of the Nobles may be endangered by a number of exceptionable Jurors, who are entirely at the devotion of a Minister, and the property of private Citizens may be invaded by the parol evidence of men who make a mockery of honor.

When the first honors become the wages of corruption—when abject drudges are raised to the highest dignities, and a degraded Nobility stripped of public estimation, sink into the ready tools of an arbitrary Minister, the Constitution betrays the strongest symptoms of decay. An augmentation of the Peerage is, in such a case,
if

if possible, much more formidable to the People than that of a standing army, as it throws too great an additional weight into the scale of prerogative.

If ever the usurpations of an ambitious Monarch should rouse the People to resistance, a majority of the Lords would confederate with the most despotic Prince, in order to preserve their already degraded dignities. In the last century, the Commons, when they determined to extirpate Monarchy, voted the House of Lords to be useless. They are therefore the most dangerous, because the most self-interested household troops. I trust that we shall never be reduced to so deplorable an extremity, as to arm against our Sovereign; but if we were, I am persuaded, that our struggles for emancipation from any usurped authority, would meet with every possible opposition from the bulk of the Nobility, many of whom are too *diffident* to hope, that, if once levelled to an equal rank with the People, they should again emerge from obscurity by their native energy of soul, though buoyed up by all the advantages of fortune.

But, of all creations, none are so inimical to Liberty as those of venal Lawyers: for, while the Law Lords profess a disposition to preserve a counterpoise in the Constitution, the evident tendency of their Parliamentary conduct and judicial

dicial proceedings, is to destroy it; and, while they affect a zeal to preserve the privileges of the three estates inviolate, they perpetually favour the encroachments of prerogative, betray a bias to arbitrary sway, and crush the People with a rod of iron, from whom they have but recently emerged. I cannot be supposed to make my assertion a general one, since the names of Camden and Ashburton lend a lustre to the Peerage, and to human nature.

I would not be understood to reflect upon all modern creations. Some among them had ample and undeniable pretensions to a Coronet, when a Coronet was indeed an honor; and I am only amazed at their acceptance of it. I cannot but think the confidence of the People and the representation of a County ill exchanged for such a bauble. No man ^{also} respects that person who rises to honors, by the force of his virtues and abilities, more than I do. Such a character is self-ennobled, and he who founds his honors on the basis of acknowledged worth, though the first gentleman of his family, cannot, in justice, be called an upstart. That epithet should be confined to men whose rise is a matter of public indignation and astonishment.

In the year 1711, antecedent to the infamous Treaty of Utrecht, the Tories created twelve Peers at once, in order to overturn the Whig interest;

interest; but the years 1776 and 1780 outdid all precedent, and left this abuse of the prerogative without an example in our annals. They were memorable æras in the History of the English and Irish Peerage, by a scandalous prostitution of which a Tory Administration received the sanction of Parliament to persevere in the prosecution of a War which brought this Country to the brink of ruin.* If enthusiasm for the National Glory; if Elevation of Sentiment, Patriotic zeal or Military Services, were the Characteristics

* English Creations in the Year 1776.

Earls,	-	-	-	-	-	3
Viscounts,	-	-	-	-	-	2
Barons,	-	-	-	-	-	10
Peerefs,	-	-	-	-	-	1
						<hr/>
						Total, 16

Irish Creations in the Year 1776.

Earls,	-	-	-	-	-	5
Viscounts,	-	-	-	-	-	7
Barons,	-	-	-	-	-	18
						<hr/>
					Total,	30

Which make 46 new Creations in 1776

And in the Year 1780.

Barons,	-	-	-	-	7
Peerefs,	-	-	-	-	1
					<hr/>
				Total Englifh,	8
					<hr/>
					1

characteristics or recommendations of the Multitudes who were then ennobled, I should rejoice in their Exaltation. It is true that a few names among them would, even in a purer Age, do honour to a Peerage List; but I much fear that by far the greatest number of them, if eminent for any thing, were only distinguished by a Superior Apathy for the Glory of their Country; by low intrigues and unblushing prostitution.

A Reform in the Peerage of Ireland is not only essential to the Liberties of that Country, but to the Liberties of England, and I trust, for the sake of both Countries, now United in Interest, that it may be immediately adopted. It has been too long a practice to bribe English Commoners with Irish Peerages, who were thought too base to sit in the hereditary Council of this Country. Thus were our Representatives corrupted, and the Peerage of the Sister Kingdom degraded. I therefore hope that the

Irish Creations, 1780.

Earls,	-	-	-	-	-	2
Viscounts,	-	-	-	-	-	9
Barons,	-	-	-	-	-	5
						<hr/>
						Total, 16
						<hr/>

Which make 24 English, and 46 Irish new Creations, (in all 70) in the two years of 1779 and 1780.

I

Irish

Irish Legislature will now ^{re-}form their Constitution by a Peerage Bill, and put a stop to ~~these~~ ^{such} Abuses.

According to the Anecdote related of George the First, he refused a red Ribband to a Lord Mayor of London, to whom his Minister had promised one “because he had been a footman;” but offered him an Irish Peerage. I shall not pretend to Authenticate this Anecdote, but I will be bold to affirm, that the Monarch was disgraced, the Ancient Nobility of that Country insulted, and the People injured by the Advice of that Minister, who set up the Irish Peerage to Public Sale, and sold Titles for two Seats in Parliament, to Men, upon whom even King James would be ashamed to confer the Title of a Baronet. Nay, the Second Charles would blush at such apparent predilection, such seeming Encouragement of private Vice and public prostitution, as our Gracious Sovereign was then betrayed into, by the advice of Traitors.

We are still possessed of ample resources to restore the Empire, if we have but Virtue enough to employ them. By a rigid œconomy in the National Expenditure; by an utter annihilation of the present ruinous system of Corruption; by a Reduction of Taxes; by equalizing our Establishments to our Revenues; by sumptuary
Laws

Laws to discountenance Luxury ; by discouraging Vice and encouraging Population ; by the Repeal of all unequal and oppressive Laws, which must disgust the independent private Citizen, and induce him to emigrate ; by arming the People, and disarming an enormous Peace Establishment of Mercenaries ; by securing the Civil Liberties of the humblest individual, and, by the mildness of its Government, attaching him to his Country ; by a peculiar attention to our Fisheries and Tillage, the best Nurseries ^{for} ~~at~~ our Fleets and Armies ; by an unremitting endeavour to recover the Empire of the Sea ; by employing our disbanded Soldiers, and holding out such superior Encouragement to our Sailors and Shipwrights, as shall prevent them from entering into Foreign Service ; by adopting such Regulations as shall render the Necessaries of Life both cheap and plentiful ; and, above all things, by attending to that first Source of National Strength and Riches, a rapid Propagation of the Human Species, the Sun of England may rise once more with encreasing Glory.

In France, and other Popish Countries, Superstition is no more ; and the vast Estates of the Church are considered as branches of Finance. In what does the superior Merit of our Churchmen consist, that their immense estates are considered as sacred ; and that, while the

necessaries of life are taxed so high as to be almost unattainable to the industrious Cottager, their revenues are inviolate? Let us not, then, be left behind by all our neighbours, in every measure of sound policy, while we outstrip them in all the false refinements of Luxury. Let us investigate the value of Church Lands, and lett them upon improveable Leases. Let us recruit our peasantry. Tillage has too long been shamefully neglected; and, by a scandalous remissness in our Legislature, while there are millions of uncultivated acres ^{in this country}, we should often be exposed to the horrid calamity of Famine, if we could not receive supplies of Corn from foreign markets. Thus is the Nation drained of money, for a commodity which may be raised at home in great abundance, and the cultivation of which would astonishingly contribute to Population.

If the Commons of England were enclosed, and lett to Loyal Refugees, the whole kingdom would exhibit a scene of cultivation and improvement: and surely it would be wiser policy to plant and provide for them in this depopulated country, than to establish them in foreign Colonies, which experience has evinced are but precarious tenures. Let the Commons then be enclosed, not for the advantage of individuals, but of the Public. The
scandalous

scandalous waste of lands in this country is a disgrace to its Police. The surrounding Poor will not be injured by this measure; on the contrary, it will be productive of a plenty to which they now are strangers: for the produce of one improved acre is equal to ^{that of} twenty acres covered with heath and briers. In this case, industry will succeed to laziness, abundance to scanty penury; and the fund arising from their rents, when improved, may be appropriated to the Poor Rates, and lessen the present burthens of the People. Indeed it is inconceivable, to a man unused to calculation, how large a revenue might be raised by the confiscation of Church Lands, and the Inclosure of Commons: nor am I out of bounds when I assert, that, after paying a competent stipend to the Clergy, and without one additional Officer to collect it, they would produce Two Millions annually, besides encouraging Industry, promoting Population, and improving the Morals of the People.

An immediate attention to objects of such moment, together with an assiduous cultivation of our alliance with America; which, from a reciprocity of interest, ties of blood, the same language, the same religion, and nearly the same laws, may be founded upon a broader and more solid basis of amity than ever before
subsisted

subsisted between two Countries, may again raise Britain to that pre-eminent rank, she has always held among the Nations, and make her at once the Pride and Terror of Europe.

Creations during the present Reign.

ENGLISH.			STILL EXISTING.		
Dukes	-	2	Ditto	-	2
Earls	-	12	Ditto	-	10
Viscounts	-	15	Ditto	-	9
Barons	-	40	Ditto	-	34
Peereffes	-	6	Ditto	-	5
<hr/>			<hr/>		
75			60		

IRISH.			STILL EXISTING.		
Duke	-	1	Ditto	-	1
Marquis	-	1	Ditto	-	0
Earls	-	31	Ditto	-	25
Viscounts	-	31	Ditto	-	16
Barons	-	48	Ditto	-	30
Peereffes	-	3	Ditto	-	2
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115			74		

From which it appears, that there have been one hundred and ninety new Creations since the commencement of the present Reign, fifty-six of which are either become extinct, or have merged in superior titles. The ~~new~~ English Creations of Geo. III. exceed the whole Peerage

age of England, upon the accession of James I. by the number of sixteen ; as James found the Peerage but fifty-nine. Sixty new Creations still appear upon the Red-book, since the year 1761 ; and if we add the Sixteen Scotch Peers and Twenty-seven Bishops to this List, who in truth may be considered as Creations of the present Reign, the product will amount to one hundred and three in the English House of Lords ; a formidable number, independent of those whose ambition has been gratified by the four Orders of Knighthood, the Creation of almost two hundred English and Irish Baronets, and Knight Batchelors innumerable.

F I N I S.







